

Home on the Range with Lady Bird Johnson in Texas

california JOURNAL

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a State Net Publication

Political consultants and the campaign dollar: How the money is raised & spent



Ya-da-ya-da

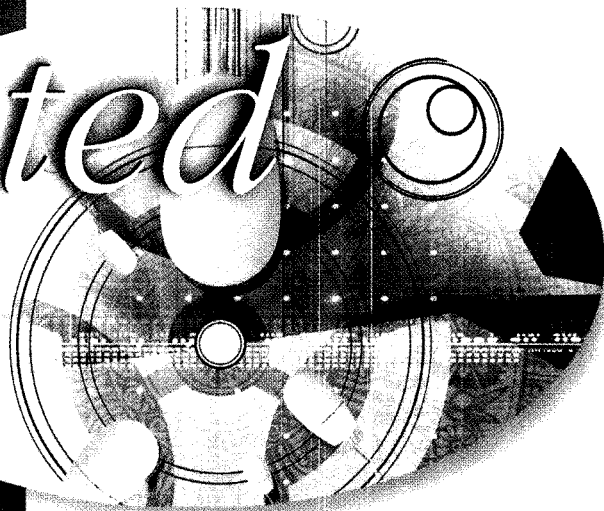
Bringing
in the
bounty:
How
parties
put a price
on voters

Connected

people

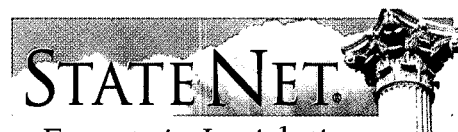
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November 2000
Volume XXXI, Number 11

Upfront

Prom memories and more

Talking Points

Car talk, cyber cards

Two Cents

Lady Bird, legend of history
By Emelyn Rodriguez

Rostrum

Readers write back

D.C. Perspective

If only California were in play
By Marc Sandalow

Remember to vote!

You've heard of the sandwich generation? Well, this is our sandwich edition, appearing as it does between *California Journal's* trademark pre-election (October 2000) and post-election (December 2000) volumes. Come December, our pages again will be packed full of comprehensive election results and insightful analyses of outcomes you may have missed in the first flurry of post-election coverage.

Until then, our deadlines demand that we serve up something fresh and apart from the moving target of campaign news, so we invite you to sample a menu of related topics in this issue: Associate Editor Noel Brinkerhoff introduces readers to the debate over the role consultants play in today's political campaigns — and takes a fascinating look at California's latest global export, the campaign consultant. And Associate Editor Kathleen Les details how California's Democratic and Republican parties are upping the ante for "bounty-hunters" scrambling to sign up new registered voters. Meanwhile, Senior Editor Emelyn Rodriguez presents another in a series of thorough examinations of the problem of the uninsured in California.

These are but a handful of the offerings in this month's *California Journal*. Enjoy the issue, and keep your mind open to our omnipresent, subliminal message: Remember to vote!

Political consultants

The good, bad and the costly of hiring a consultant.
By Noel Brinkerhoff



International consulting

California's political talent goes abroad.
By Noel Brinkerhoff



Putting a bounty on voters

Dwindling registration has both major parties on the run, chasing down new voters — for a price.
By Kathleen Les



Ready, aim, target the voters

By filling out that simple registration form, voters give savvy strategists more than enough information to go on.
By Kathleen Les



Where's the health care Rx?

Everyone's talking about the woes of the uninsured this campaign season, but there's nary a solution in sight.
By Emelyn Rodriguez



Mapping California

At a glance, see the issues driving our state's election.

The perfect reform

Think there's too much money and special interest influence in politics? Here's a "swift" solution.
By Jock O'Connell



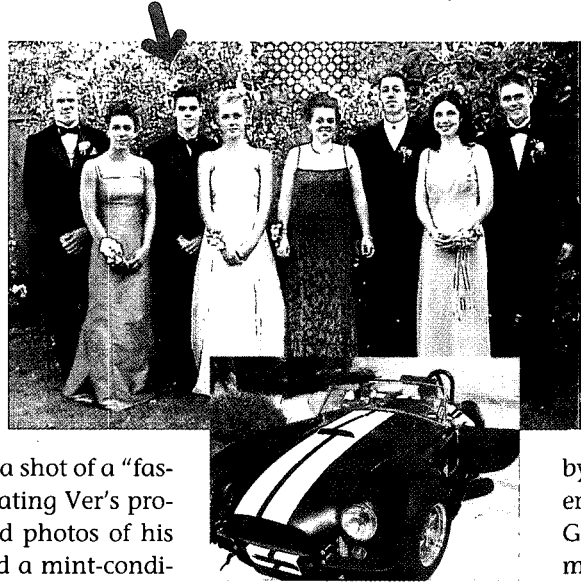
Pics from my prom. In the short time they've been around, candidate Web sites have become cookie-cutter-like, usually filled with a candidate's standard bio and generalized statements on the issues. But then came the one belonging to Libertarian Roger Ver (www.rogerver.org). Running in the 28th Assembly District, young Mr. Ver, all of 21 and always smiling, gave voters a little something extra — photos from his high school prom. There he is in his tux standing next to his date, another with his close friends, and still another with friends at the dance. In addition, Ver uploaded photos of himself warning local drivers about a neighborhood speed trap and his tax-night protest at the local post office, including a shot of a "fascist" cop who tried confiscating Ver's protest sign. Ver also included photos of his cars — a new Cadillac and a mint-condition 1965 Shelby Cobra sports car — which might explain why Ver wasn't asking for campaign donations. But you could give him a call. His cell phone was listed on the site and he encouraged anyone to give him a buzz — as long as it was during his "normal waking hours" of 10 a.m. to midnight.

Let's get ready to... vote? Proving he'll go the extra round to boost voter turnout, Secretary of State Bill Jones teamed up last month

with the World Wrestling Federation's national effort to register voters for the November election. Jones appeared at wrestling events in Anaheim and Los Angeles as part of his eight-day statewide push before the voter-registration deadline and encouraged WWF fans to sign up so they could *smack down* their choice on November 7. "Tonight — whether you're cheering from the stands or getting clotheslined in the ring — you can also easily register to vote," Jones said in a release touting the events. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, the WWF's nonpartisan voter registration drive signed up more than 100,000 new voters. The WWF, watched each week by 22 million young viewers, also offered Al Gore and George W. Bush a five-minute appearance on the show, which would have

included a friendly arm-wrestling match between the two contestants. Oddly, Bush and Gore declined the offer.

One for Paul Harvey. You know and we know that there's always a story behind the story of what goes on inside the Capitol. Certainly that's been the case with a recent bill by Assemblywoman Carole Migden (D-San Francisco) that would have forced certain online retailers to col-



Samurai under attack?

Like the uncle no one wants at Thanksgiving dinner, former Republican lawmaker Gerry Felando was back this election, making trouble for his party's efforts to reach out to minority voters. Running in the 53rd Assembly District against Democratic incumbent George Nakano, Felando's campaign Web site featured his Japanese-American opponent in full Samurai regalia. The site included accusations that Nakano accepted illegal campaign contributions from "federally convicted money launderers and Chinese arms dealers." It also claimed that Nakano, 65, was too frail to represent his district, while simultaneously accusing him of using his black-belt martial arts skills to threaten a fellow Assembly member. The Web site also tried linking Nakano to contributions from Japanese auto firms and the Japanese-owned Firestone tire company. When asked if his accusations against Nakano were racially tinged, Felando bristled at the notion. "I am not a bigot ... and my longtime friendship with Willie Brown will confirm that," said the ex-assemblyman, referring to his one-time close association with the African-American Assembly speaker. "Anyone who views this as racially motivated is nuts." 🏠

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lect sales tax, as state law requires. Though everyone assumes that e-commerce is exempt from sales taxes, that's not the case. Internet retailers with a California presence, such as a warehouse, HQs or a store, always have had to collect the tax but some refused. And California's tax man has refused to make 'em pay. How's that for out-of-character? It turns out that the state's chief tax man — Dean Andal, chair of the Board of Equalization and a former legislator — has his baby blues set on higher office. In fact, the buzz that Andal, a Republican, plans to run for governor in 2002 has even reached Washington D.C. Lo and behold, a big plank of his platform is Andal-as-champion-for-e-commerce, not a bad pitch in a state that stakes so much on the future of the New Economy. And Andal

is uniquely positioned because he served on the high-profile Advisory Commission on Electronic Commerce, as the huffin' and puffin' commish appointed to agree with Congress that the Internet needn't be weighed down with the same taxes that bog down Main Street businesses. Meanwhile, back in the state Capitol, you can bet Governor Gray Davis' palms are getting sweaty just thinking about Andal revving up those GOP engines, and — gasp! — doing early fund-raising to boot. Under this scenario, Davis has two reactions: First, his gut-level, A-No. 1 reaction to just about everything — find the political money and go after it; and second, spin a favorable political image for his re-election. How better to beat Andal at his own game than to encourage a friendly legislator, Migden, to trump up an Internet tax bill that the governor himself can loudly denounce with a veto — and pro-

claim *himself* the e-commerce savior? (Tips accepted.) Topping it off, Davis iced his cake by unveiling a new California Commission on Tax Policy in the New Economy. We're betting this is one commission to which Dean Andal will *not* be appointed.

Where did you come from? Running as the Republican nominee in the GOP-dominated 33rd Senate seat, Dick Ackerman

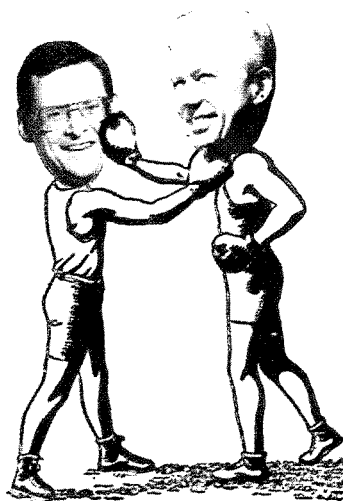
didn't expect to encounter any trouble from his opponents on the November ballot. But when the sample ballot arrived in district mailboxes, the Fullerton assemblyman found himself facing — surprise, surprise — another Republican. Only it turned out the Republican wasn't a Republican at all. Shades of 1995 when Assembly Republicans were accused of

putting a phony Democrat on the ballot in the Doris Allen recall election? Nope. Just a big boo-boo by the local registrar of voters' office. Apparently, election officials accidentally listed the Libertarian candidate, Michael Chacon, as a Republican on 121,000 copies of the sample ballot. As Chacon told the *Orange County Register*, "I've been slandered in lots of ways before, but this is a new one." 🏛️

AD 59 Correction

In our assessment of the race for the 59th Assembly District in Los Angeles, *California Journal* erroneously indicated that Republican Dennis Mountjoy's son was the subject of legal difficulties, which have caused adverse headlines bearing the Mountjoy name. Mr. Mountjoy's son is not the subject of those legal troubles. Rather, it is his nephew. *California Journal* regrets the error.

umbrage



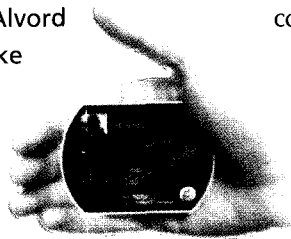
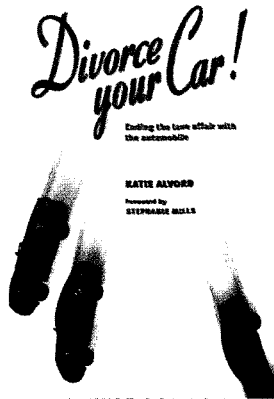
Excerpts: From the Bookshelf

Divorce Your Car!
Ending the Love Affair with the Automobile
by Katie Alvord
New Society Publishers, \$17.95

The next time you're fuming in traffic gridlock, this book might offer the perfect tonic.

Author and traffic reform advocate Katie Alvord feels your pain and articulates the price we've paid for our devotion to four-wheeled vehicles. In Alvord's estimation, it's been an unhealthy relationship, as the automobile has revved up pollution, sprawl, congestion, noise, stress and devastating injuries and death.

The book's title is her solution and her testimonial to life without a car. Rather than preach, Alvord gently prods, urging us to take those tiny steps toward a car-free or, as she likes to call it, a "car-lite" lifestyle. "At some point, the personal becomes political and that point comes quickly in decisions we make about using cars: Our personal travel choices can influence transportation, fiscal and land use policies," she writes.



Tech Watch: Scrap the paper, bring on the gadgetry

As if you hadn't noticed, we're living in a digital age and nothing — not even campaigns and elections — is left out of the loop.

The latest gadget in the political tool belt is a tiny piece of plastic known as the "Cyber Card," which allows candidates to convey their message from a palm-sized CD. No bigger than a credit card, the Cyber Card slips into any computer's CD-Rom player and comes loaded with digital sound, full video images and one-minute blurbs regaling viewers with a candidate's profile, issues, even family photos and a link to his or her Web site. "A handshake has never been so powerful!" claims an ad in *Campaigns & Elections* magazine.

But it's in the polling booth that technology has really taken hold. In a handful of California counties, voters for the first time tapped their electoral choices onto a computer touch-screen. It's called electronic voting and three counties — Alameda, Los Angeles and Riverside — offered an alternative to punching holes on paper ballots at walk-in polling sites that welcomed voters weekdays — and even weekends — starting in October.

It's all intended to make voting easier, less intimidating, more accessible to blind, disabled and non-English speaking voters, as well as speed up the state's ballot counting on Election Night.

Not everyone is enamored with the notion of electronic voting. Some believe it will deter the elderly and minorities, who may not be as computer-savvy as younger voters. And others raise concerns over privacy and security.

And then there's Jim Condit Jr., director of the Cincinnati-based Citizens for a Fair Vote Count, who believes voting should be done only "the way our Founding Fathers did back in 1776: on easily read paper ballots."

Quotables.....

"By definition, we are not normal people... and that's a good thing. We care passionately about politics and government service. Most people don't care... because those people have lives."

— Political consultant Dan Schnur, speaking to a UC Davis audience of candidates and campaign managers.

Election Notes:

Is voting a marketing dream come true?

We expect our Olympic athletes to wind up on the Wheaties box. But Goldfish crackers as election icons? 7-Eleven conducting presidential polls on coffee cups? Oldsmobile urging women to "get out of neutral" and join a friend at the ballot booth?

Consumers this election were bombarded, it seems, by advertisers cozing up to voting as a marketing message.

The get-out-the-vote banner was draped everywhere. On MTV, the young and restless were exhorted to "choose or lose" at the polls, while go-vote reminders rolled across the big screen at movie theaters. At some 5,200 7-Eleven stores nationwide, coffee consumers "voted" every time they grabbed either the Big Al, George Dubya or No Opinion cup (which proved the most popular choice by far). The polling results were poured daily onto 7-Eleven's Web site, where visitors also could register to vote.

And even that cocktail party and lunchbox staple — the little Pepperidge Farm goldfish — arrived on grocery store shelves in red-white-

and-blue boxes emblazoned "Election — Vote for Goldfish." The Pepperidge people ran a goldfish-for-president candidate, who appeared in supermarkets from San Diego to Washington, D.C., running on a platform of lowering the voting age to 8 and abolishing Mondays. Every "voter" on its Web site entered an "All-American" sweepstakes. The prize? A free trip to next January's presidential inauguration in Washington, D.C.

What's up with all this? Why are marketers cashing in on something as mundane as civic duty?

One expert in political communications said corporate America is responding to a collective sense that we've got a national problem with voting. "It's corporate 'good citizenship' because there's a real fear that turnout will be so low," said Barbara C'Connor, professor of communications at California State University, Sacramento. "It's more acute this year because each year we see continuing, declining voter turnout. We've finally reached a real concern that we're going to have a democracy without citizens."

— Compiled by CJ editors

By the numbers

Let's talk issues

Spending the federal surplus:

33: Percentage of Californians who prefer using it to reduce the national debt.

40: Percentage of Californians who prefer spending it on an across-the-board tax cut.

29: Percentage of Democrats who prefer a tax cut.

50: Percentage of Republicans who prefer a tax cut.

Prescription drugs:

74: Percentage of adults favoring Medicare coverage for prescription drugs — even if it means increasing premiums paid by Medicare patients.

Open border with Mexico:

65: Percentage of adults who think it's a "bad thing" for California.

Fiscal fitness:

42: Percentage of adults who say their family is "better off" financially than a year ago.

10: Percentage of adults who say their family is "worse off."

Source: Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), September 2000 survey

Consultants and

When Jeff Bennett ran for the state Assembly down in Southern California this year, he followed the standard rule of modern campaigning: He hired a consultant. In fact, the millionaire Bennett went out and hired a team of seasoned pros to guide his bid for the Republican nomination in the 66th Assembly District.

But that team didn't come cheap. Of the \$1.3 million Bennett spent on his campaign, which included cable TV ads, mailers, phone banks and signs, nearly \$250,000 went toward fees and commissions for his consultants, including

A mainstay in today's political contests, consultants know how to raise, and especially spend, money. But it's not always in the best interest of either candidates or the electorate.

\$72,000 for Ken Kachigian, \$30,296 for Jim Nygren, \$64,500 for Dallas Tuff & Associates and \$30,990 for Stoorza Ziegau Metzger & Hunt.

And what did Bennett get for all this pricey, expert advice? A second-place finish in the March primary.

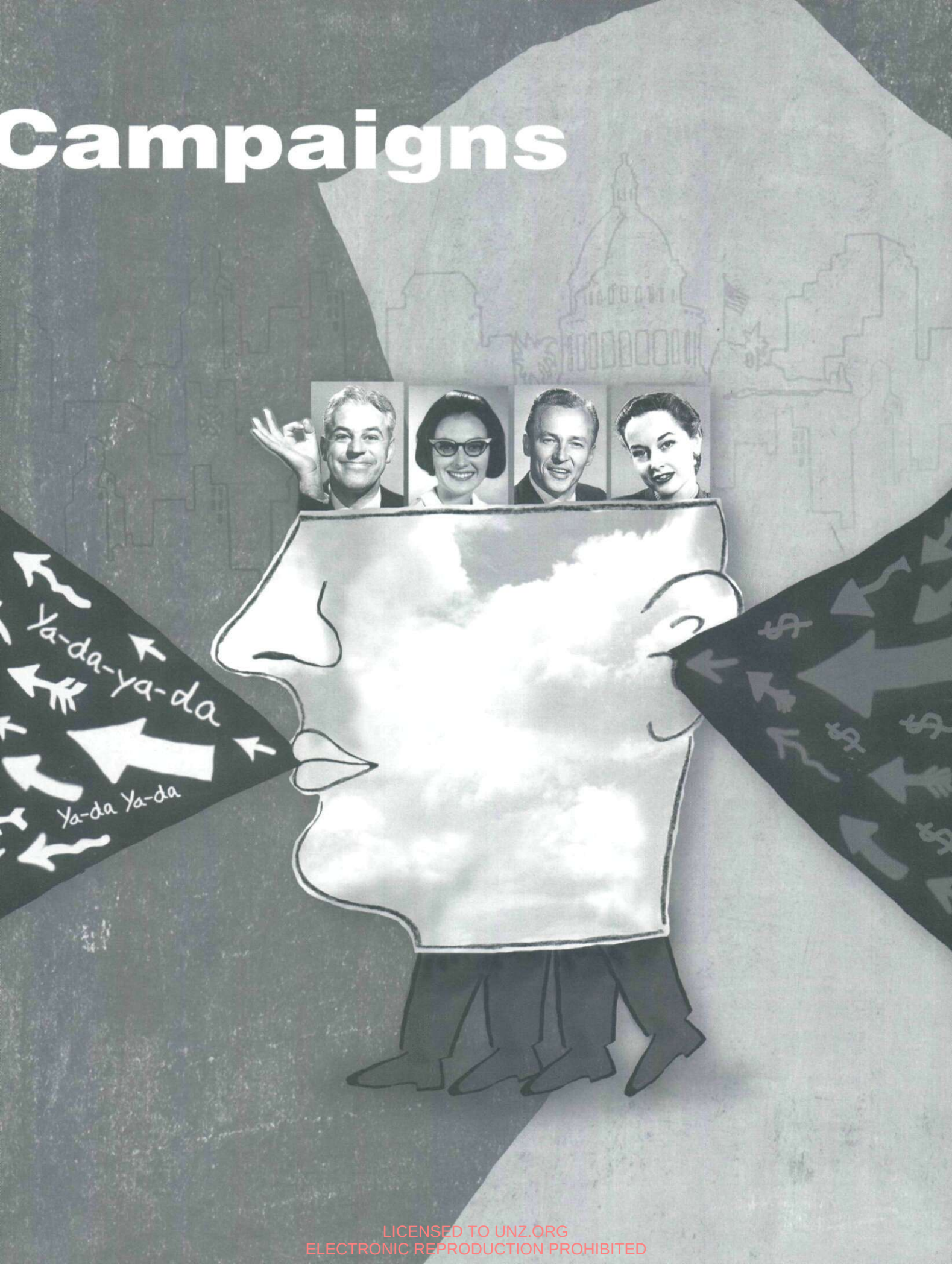
The same thing happened to airline executive Al Checchi in 1998 when he finished second to Gray Davis in the Democratic gubernatorial primary after spending nearly \$40 million, most of it from his own pocket. And when it came to consultants, Checchi doled out 10 times more than Bennett — or \$2.3 million to a laundry list of advisors (see chart, page 11).

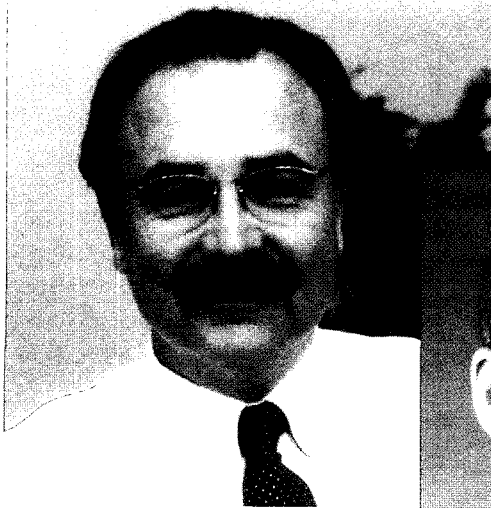
Of course, for every Jeff Bennett and Al Checchi, there are plenty of candidates who pay handsomely for campaign consultants and emerge victorious. But win or lose, one thing is certain: The use of consultants in campaigns has been on an upswing and the field has become ever more crowded and specialized.

Though cash was not a problem for Bennett and Checchi, raising money is the first step for most candidates

By Noel Brinkerhoff

Campaigns





Darryl Sragow

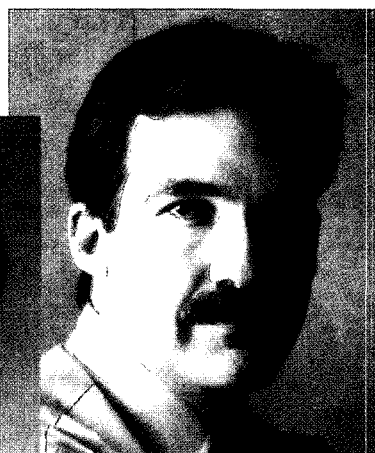
launching a bid for office. So where do they start? With a fund-raising consultant, naturally.

And once the money starts rolling in, other consultants enter the picture to tell candidates how to spend their campaign cash. Need a television or radio ad? Hire a media consultant. Need a mail brochure? Hire a mail consultant. Need to dig up dirt on an opponent? Hire an opposition research consultant. They're all available, ready to meet every campaign need. There are even consultants who do a little of everything — the full-service or "one-stop-shop" consultant — so a candidate's campaign manager doesn't have to deal with three or four different specialists.

The proliferation of political consultants compounds



Wayne Johnson



Richard Temple

worries that, due to their financial interest in raising the cost of campaigns, consultants serve to widen the gulf between candidates and voters. Critics charge that political consultants encourage candidates to spend more time raising money than getting in touch with voters. This, the thinking goes, helps to drive elections out of the hands of volunteer citizens and into the hands of paid professionals.

A bad influence?

"The worst effect that consultants have had on American politics is professionalizing what used to be a citizen endeavor," said Richard Reeves, a nationally syndicated columnist, at a *Sacramento Bee* forum on political consultants earlier this year. "They [consultants] don't want volunteers coming in here [campaigns] and doing that kind of thing.... This professionalization has profoundly changed American politics and I don't think for the better. It has driven people out of the people's business."

During this year's U.S. District Court trial examining the constitutionality of the campaign finance reform initiative Proposition 208, former Democratic presidential nominee Michael Dukakis also lamented a declining grassroots element in campaigns, which he attributed in part to consultants and their effort to orient campaigns around high-cost media resources. "A lot of people that work professionally in campaigns do so for the best reasons," Dukakis testified. "There's no question, however, that if you're a consultant and your compensation depends on how much paid television you can place, and typically it's a percentage of what you place, there's a kind of built-in conflict there which I think is pretty obvious," Knox said.

Similar criticism is echoed by campaign finance reform advocate Jim Knox, president of the California chapter of Common Cause, who doesn't doubt that consultants have driven up the cost of elections. "They have a vested interest in raising as much money as possible because they get a cut," Knox said.

Even some consultants agree that their profession contributes to a rise in campaign costs. Murray Fishel, president of the Ohio-based Grassroots Political Campaigns, which specializes in helping progressive candidates and organizations, told an audience at a recent campaign management conference, "You always hear consultants say, 'Raise a million dollars and then come see me.' It's insane. Outside of California, we call it 'the Californication of politics.'"

For their part, consultants insist they're simply advis-

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ing candidates about the realities of running for office — that cash is king and that without it, clients won't stand a chance of reaching voters. "Candidates have to raise money," says Republican consultant Richard Temple. "That's part of the process," even if it means taking time away from meeting constituents.

"You have to do a trade-off," he adds. "You can't shake 300,000 hands [in an Assembly district] and convince people to vote for you. You need money to communicate and that's how the system works."

Sometimes, though, candidates are reluctant to devote much time to dialing for dollars, preferring instead to be out meeting voters. Brian Rix, a Los Angeles-based fund-raising consultant, says candidates "are notorious for saying, 'I don't want to do that [beg for donations]. I don't want to sully myself.'" Even veteran politicians such as U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, Rix says, are queasy about asking donors for money.

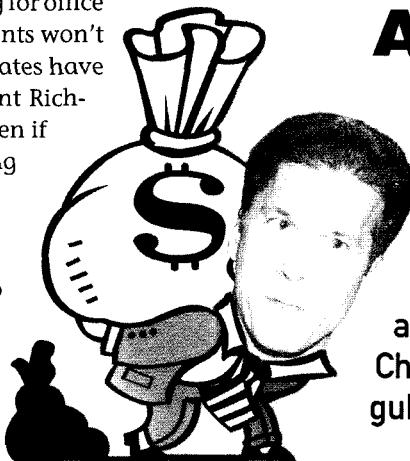
And when a candidate won't put the time into fund-raising, says consultant Darryl Sragow, a consultant must do what's necessary to turn that around. "You browbeat them [the candidate]," he says. "You get confrontational with them."

Sragow helped former state insurance commissioner John Garamendi in 1994 with his unsuccessful bid for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination. It was a campaign during which Garamendi spent approximately 25 percent of his time raising money — not nearly enough, Sragow says. Many consultants say the minimum threshold is closer to 50 percent.

A typical day in the life of someone seeking a legislative office, according to Temple and others, consists of a breakfast meeting with a potential donor, followed by phone calls the rest of the morning to more potential donors, then lunch with yet another donor, and then more fund-raising calls until about 3 or 4 p.m., at which time the candidate can take time to go out and walk precincts. That means a candidate devotes a good eight hours a day to soliciting money — not including nighttime fund-raising events, which absorb even more of a candidate's time and energy. Fund-raising events are where consultants can be especially instrumental in hooking up candidates with big-money donors, such as lobbyists. "We use our contacts with the Third House [lobbying corps] and say, 'We think you'll like this person and why,'" said Temple.

Commissions and kickbacks

How much money consultants make on a campaign varies considerably, depending on the size of the race. Most receive some kind of fee, which averages \$3,000 to \$5,000 a month for legislative races, according to Temple. Some consultants bill hourly in addition to receiving a flat fee. But the real money is made on commissions. For every piece of mail or TV/radio commercial that a consultant produces for a candidate, he or she charges a commission,



Al Checchi: Consultant sugar daddy

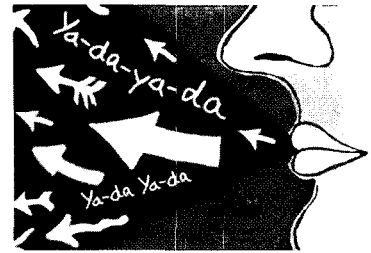
A total of 72 firms and individuals were paid fees for professional management and consulting services by Checchi's unsuccessful 1998 gubernatorial campaign.

Shrum Devine & Donilon (Washington, D.C.)	\$610,896
Sragow & Maravich (Los Angeles)	\$256,300
Michael Galizio (Sacramento)	\$139,000
Varoga & Rice (Houston, TX)	\$132,500
Elliot & Zweben (Washington, D.C.)	\$98,986
Burkett Group (Ventura)	\$90,231
Susan Burnside (Los Angeles)	\$65,000
Investigative Group International (Washington, D.C.)	\$60,576
Terry Lenzer (Washington, D.C.)	\$60,576
Michael Cuddy (Seattle, WA)	\$50,400
Smart Campaigns 2 (Albany)	\$50,000
Lori McGrogan (Washington, D.C.)	\$49,504
Patricia Ewing (Los Angeles)	\$45,000
KWS Consulting (Manhattan Beach)	\$36,000
Donald Baer (Washington, D.C.)	\$35,000
Others*	\$523,073
Total	\$2,303,042

*57 other firms and individuals received payments ranging from \$1,000 to \$32,000.

Source: California Secretary of State's Office

Advice from consultants — when it leads to extreme campaigns that voters see as unfair and negative — can cost candidates dearly.



typically 15 percent. This peak rate, however, appears to be dropping as more consultants enter the lucrative field, driving fees down by increasing competition, says consultant Wayne Johnson. Sragow agrees, putting today's TV commission rate at closer to 5 percent.

It is because of these commissions that consultants who run full-service operations sometimes get accused of overselling the amount of TV or mail for a campaign. They've also been known to accept kickbacks or money under the table from operators of TV and radio stations, one consultant privately admitted. Brian Johnston, executive director of the California ProLife Council, who has worked extensively with consultants, finds it unfair that consultants often "get the bum rap" because "there are

some stinkers" in the business. Campaign consultants, he says, are like auto mechanics — you have to shop around to make sure "you won't get stuck with something you don't need" or find yourself working with those "who cut fan belts."

Those who try to rip off candidates won't stay around for long, says GOP consultant Joe Justin, because word eventually gets out if you're gouging people. "It's a very small world we work in," he says. "If I do more TV than is necessary, in a seat that requires more mail, I'll lose the race and won't have any clients for the next [election] cycle."

And then there are the TV ads themselves. The spots designed by political consultants often look all the same,

International Consulting: Making the world safe for democracy?

By Noel Brinkerhoff

When it comes to exports, one of California's least-known products may be the political consultants it sends overseas.

A review of the 100-member International Association of Political Consultants reveals the names of 11 campaign wizards who hail from the Golden State — roughly a quarter of the country's total 45 and more than any other single country outside of the U.S.

And that doesn't even include Republican consultants Joe Shumate and George Gorton, former advisers to Governor Pete Wilson, who aren't on the IAPC list, but whose overseas exploits have garnered the most publicity among California's political jet-setters.

Four years ago, Shumate and Gorton (along with New York-based consultant Richard Dresner) were the subject of a *Time* magazine cover story and an HBO movie for helping Russian President Boris Yeltsin win his come-from-behind 1996 re-election. The experience was harrowing and at times dangerous, according to published accounts, but the three-some was well rewarded (\$250,000 plus expenses).

Money is one reason why consultants with a network of contacts extending beyond California trek overseas to work on campaigns, usually in odd-numbered years when there are no elections to advise back home. But it's not the only reason for venturing to faraway lands.

Republican Sal Russo, listed as Salvatore Russo in the IAPC directory, says his work in other countries is just part of his consulting firm's diverse portfolio. But he admits to being a foreign affairs wonk, which fits nicely with his desire to foster democracy in places where the "Evil Empire" once reigned. Russo proudly points to his work that helped Violeta Chamorro win the 1990 Nicaraguan presidential election, which removed the Communist Sandinistas from power, and the 1991 referendum that won the Ukraine its independence from the former Soviet Union.

Fostering democracy is also why another conservative Republican consultant, Wayne Johnson, spent time in



says Bob Gardner, president of the national advertising agency of Gardner Geary Coll in San Francisco. Gardner has produced his share of political ads, working on TV spots for Dick Cheney's congressional bids and the presidential campaigns of Gerald Ford in 1976, George Bush in 1992 and Bob Dole in 1996. And from what he sees of today's campaign ads, "It looks like one person did it all."

Consultants are unwilling to risk trying new techniques, he says, and hold fast to the belief that it's quantity, not quality, that makes political advertising effective. Not only can this be tough on the eye of the viewer, but it can serve to further turn off voters who feel that being bombarded with crudely produced TV ads is an insult to their intelligence.

Indeed, a 1999 survey for the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership at the University of Virginia found that almost two-thirds (65 percent) of respondents believe campaigns in the United States have gotten worse over the last two decades. Almost a third (31 percent) reported having voted *against* a candidate because of poor campaign conduct — even though they agreed with the candidate on policy issues.

Advice from consultants — when it leads to extreme campaigns that voters see as unfair and negative — can cost candidates dearly. That was certainly the case in the 1998 primary when Checchi was advised to attack his closest Democratic opponent, U.S. Representative Jane Harman, in an unrelenting series of TV ads. In the end, the attack took out Checchi, too — a "murder-suicide" as political commentators wryly call it today.

Ron Faucheux, editor-in-chief of *Campaigns & Elections* magazine, says the University of Virginia findings are significant. He writes that, "Candidates, consultants and campaign strategists — for small local offices as well as large statewide and national ones — will ignore the results of this study at their own risk."

The study is just one more piece of a bigger picture indicating that reliance on professional consultants often comes at a hefty price — not only to the candidate in terms of fund-raising demands but also to the electorate in terms of citizen participation. 🏠

Noel Brinkerhoff is associate editor of the California Journal. Comments may be sent to edit@statenet.com.

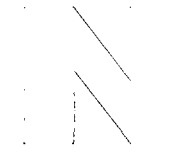


Hungary before the fall of the Iron Curtain. More recently, Johnson helped the opposition party in Zimbabwe, the Movement for Democratic Change, try and unseat longtime autocrat Robert Mugabe in this year's national elections. The effort was unsuccessful as Mugabe won again in an election marred by violence. "There were kids wearing T-shirts with the [opposition] candidate's name and people were shooting them," says Johnson. All told, 31 people died during the June election.

Collecting a huge paycheck isn't the primary motivation for Johnson, who earned only expenses for his work in southern Africa. Same goes for Democrat Joe Cerrell, a former president of the IAPC, who says his work overseas has always been pro bono. Cerrell's first international experience came in the 1970s when he helped Spain create its election process after dictator Francisco Franco was overthrown. Cerrell also tells a story that demonstrates just how small the world can be for California consultants.

While giving a presentation to a group in Turkey during the 1980s, Cerrell was asked by a member of the audience if he could talk about the administration of then-Governor George Deukmejian. Before answering, Cerrell noticed the presence of Sal Russo standing along the far wall. "Ask the man in the back of the room," Cerrell told the questioner. "He's the governor's consultant." 🏠

At what price come voters?

early one month before Election Day, the real race that determines much of the outcome at the polls was already over. Inside shopping malls and outside grocery stores up and down California, the tiny American flags calling attention to voter registration tables were retired. Stacks of voter registration forms were on their way to county election offices. And the weary workers — who'd spent weeks standing at card tables urging would-be voters to sign up — had called it quits for another election season.

Many, like Dolores Heyman of Thousand Oaks, tucked away tidy sums for spending hours at a time graciously asking passersby to sign up to vote.

Dwindling membership in both major parties has Democrats and Republicans alike investing record sums in voter registration drives. In some parts of the state, these so-called bounties — rewards paid to those who bring in newly registered voters — are setting all-time records. Are campaigns putting too high a price on the heads of voters?

A stay-at-home mother for 20 years, Heyman responded to a newspaper ad seeking workers to hawk voter registration forms outside several local shopping centers in Ventura County. Working 30 hours a week for more than a year, she earned \$8 apiece for each of the approximately 280 newly registered Republicans she signed up each month. "I don't like to see this job end," she said.

For those like Heyman, with the eagerness and physical stamina to spend hours standing in busy shopping centers and side-railing pedestrians long enough to register them to vote, there was plenty of financial incentive to stay on the job. Spurred by a healthy economy and a number of hotly contested races, parties and candidates this election season were willing to fork over record-breaking amounts in hopes of luring new voters. These so-called "bounties" range from \$2.25 paid by the state Democratic Party to boost overall party registration statewide to the \$10 per newly registered voter shelled out by the GOP in its battleground districts, such as that of incumbent Congressman James R. Rogan (R-Glendale).

Like others on the front lines of party-sponsored voter registration drives, Heyman and paid vote-gatherers constitute a growing political weapon in the pitched battles between tightly matched candidates in legislative and congressional districts. In close elections, a few percent-

By Kathleen Les

WANTED ELIGIBLE VOTERS



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**STATE DEMOCRATIC PARTY
\$2.25 PER REGISTERED VOTER**

**L.A. COUNTY WILL PAY TOP DOLLAR
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WILL PAY \$6.00 A HEAD**

age points in voter registration could mean the difference between victory and defeat.

Heyman was one of 30 hires working to boost Republican registration in the 37th Assembly District where incumbent Tony Strickland (R-Moorpark) hoped to hold onto his seat in a close rematch with Democrat Roz McGrath. In a district where demographic changes have seen Republican registration plummet seven points from a high of 47 percent in the early 1990s, the incumbent assemblyman has no doubts that paying bounties to gain new Republicans is money well spent.

Shortly after his election two years ago, Strickland hired a full-time voter registration coordinator, who put together a tiny army prepared to stake out malls and high-traffic retail outlets in search of would-be Republican voters. In the last year and a half, his registration team turned in some 15,000 registration cards, resulting in a modest nudge upward of one-and-a-half percentage points for Republicans.

"It's been a lot of work, but it's been well worth it," attests Strickland. "Quite honestly, this is something the

Republican Party used to do very well and it's something we should do more of in the future."

Shoring up the numbers

While Strickland is unique for running — and paying for — the voter registration operation directly out of his campaign office, he's not the only Republican candidate who counted on pumped-up voter registrations to increase his chances of winning this fall. Further north, in San Joaquin County, Republican Greg Aghazarian, seeking the open 17th Assembly District seat held by termed-out Democrat Mike Machado (D-Linden), also engaged in a concerted drive to reach new voters.

The Aghazarian campaign, eager to boost Republican registration numbers above 42 percent in the district, was aided by a local GOP political action committee working with Republican candidates in nested districts. Workers helping to increase Republican numbers in Stockton and Tracy earned \$6 for every Republican registration card they collected — half of that contributed by the party and half by the candidates themselves. Yet that effort didn't yield

Tinkering with the details: How consultants reach the voter

Simply by registering to vote, Californians may unwittingly play into the eager hands of candidates and consultants.

By Kathleen Les

It's a seemingly benign, half-page form that all Californians fill out when registering to vote. The personal details that each voter writes down are rudimentary: address, age, gender and political party. As raw data, it's not much. But in the hands of campaign consultants armed with sophisticated computer capabilities, those unadorned facts become political jewels.

Seemingly innocuous, these basic bits of information have enabled consultants to sharpen the aim of phone calls and direct mail targeted at would-be voters.

"When you factor everything in, it's a lot of information," said Democratic political consultant Greg Sellers, who manages campaigns for Silicon Valley area candidates. "Every year [campaigning] becomes more sophisticated as technology provides more access," he said.

Although candidates and consultants have been buying precinct lists of voters for years, what's new is the computerized capability they now have to more finely slice and dice the bare essentials gleaned from those lists.

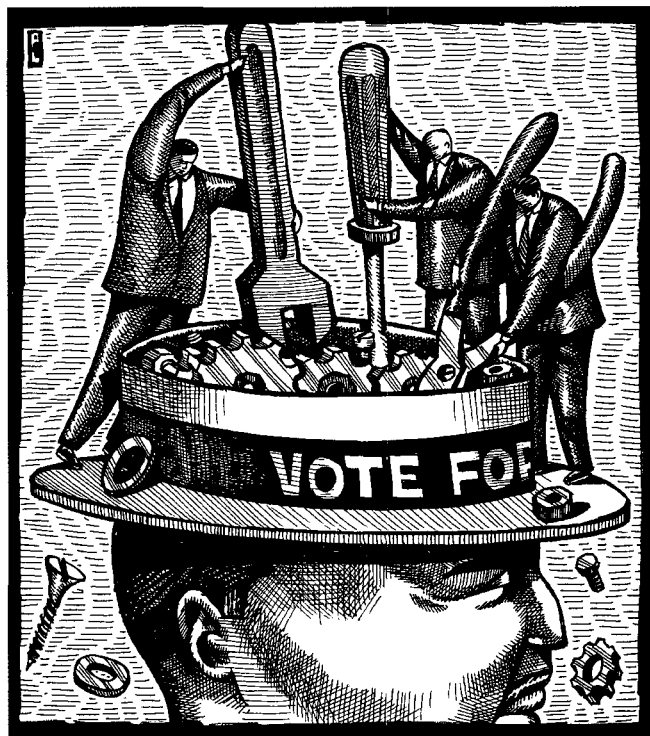


Illustration by Paul Lachine

Want to send a campaign letter to single women under the age of 34? A computer can spew out a list of every household with a voter fitting that description. Want to dial for campaign dollars from Republican men over 50? A computer can generate that list, too.

Ten years ago, when precinct lists first became avail-

the registration advantage for which they'd hoped.

Two years ago, anticipating a swing their way after the San Joaquin County registrar began cleaning the registration rolls of dead and relocated voters, Republicans ramped up their registration program to gain even further inroads. Democrats soon followed suit, renewing their efforts in the same territory.

Despite the concerted efforts by Aghazarian and the local GOP committee, Republican registration numbers just before the November election lagged even further behind Democrats. According to voter registration figures released by the Secretary of State's Office in early October, Democrats held more than a seven-point lead in the 17th Assembly District — 48 percent to Republicans' 41 percent. Although Republicans added 7,000 new voters to their side, Democrats rounded up 13,000 more voters this year.

While Democrats hunted for new voters in Stockton apartment complexes, Republican workers hung out at the Home Depot store in Tracy where homeowners swarm. While both parties track down new voters along a variety of avenues, it is more typical for Democrats to comb

residential neighborhoods scouring for would-be registrants while Republicans prefer to post workers in high-traffic shopping centers. "Republicans aren't as pro-active," said Aghazarian's campaign manager, Allison Brennan. "They wait for voters to come to them."

That's not the only difference that separates the two parties in their quest for voters. Like the very philosophies that define each party, Republican voter registration efforts are more enterprise-oriented with candidates left on their own to raise money and manpower for registration drives. Without direct help from the state party, local Republicans are increasingly following the lead of state Board of Equalization member Dean Andal and U.S. Representative Richard Pombo (R-Stockton), who five years ago established the Central Valley PAC to beef up voter registration drives in their San Joaquin County territory.

Democrats, on the other hand, run a centralized operation based in Sacramento where Assembly and Senate leaders hold the purse strings and call the shots in deciding which races receive the most voter registration help. Both houses have voter registration efforts, paying their fleet of

able on diskette and CD-ROM, the doors opened wider for campaigns to more quickly and easily piece together lists of like-minded voters. That, in turn, has spawned a new breed of political consultant who specializes in dissecting and disseminating voter data.

The initial source of that data is county election offices, where computerized voter files can be purchased for a modest fee — usually less than \$200 for an entire legislative district. The only stipulation is that the voter information be used for a legally defined political purpose.

For consultants, that data is a political springboard. Equipped with faster computers and the ability to bar code information, campaign managers can more efficiently track phone calls and face-to-face encounters with prospective voters in a given precinct. No longer confined to blitzing households with overly generalized messages, campaigns can direct their phone calls and mail to multiple voters within a household — particularly useful, for instance, when a husband and wife are registered with different parties.

"It's a total money-saver," said political consultant Sue Burnside, who uses high-end computer sorting to reach selected groups of voters. With each new advance in technology, Burnside believes she is better able to motivate constituents off their couches and into the voting booth.

"There's really nothing magical [about this]," said Glenda Hughes, vice-president of Voter Contact Services, a national data base firm that produces sophisticated voter lists. "We don't know anything particularly private about these people but, by looking at several characteristics, there are things talented political consultants can figure out," she

said.

Is a voter's privacy invaded by political consultants buying this information and using it to reach voters? Not at all, according to Allan Hoffenblum, GOP political analyst and co-author of the California Target Book, who says voters appreciate communication on issues that matter to them.

"Rather than being invasive, [campaign] messages now are more tailored to voter interests," he said. When people are bombarded with slogans and messages of no personal relevance, they tune out, he says.

Although the California Secretary of State's Office has fielded few, if any, complaints about political consultants invading privacy by buying up precinct lists, Secretary of State Bill Jones himself has become concerned about whether individual privacy is at risk given the increased electronic access to all kinds of public data, such as DMV files. Jones intends to convene a privacy summit in the near future to discuss concerns related to electronic access to public data.

There is one crucial detail of voter privacy, however, that remains untouched. Even though voter lists detail when an individual has voted, *how* he or she voted still remains a secret. Such information, of course, would delight consultants, ever desirous of diving inside the heads of voters.

But even Hughes, whose livelihood depends on performing complicated analyses of voter demographics, thinks it would be a sorry day if votes were an open book.

"That's one of our freedoms that should be preserved," she said. 🏠

Parties and candidates this election season
were willing to fork over
record-breaking amounts
in hopes of luring new voters.



workers across the state on an hourly basis. That's a separate effort from the state party's bounty program, offering \$2.25 per resistration to local Democratic clubs.

Because Democratic voters are historically younger, more ethnically diverse and more mobile, legislative Democrats have run an ambitious registration outreach program targeting communities with high numbers of immigrants or those where big population shifts hold promise for mining new Democrats.

This year, Assembly Democrats budgeted more than \$1 million to hustle up new voters in targeted races up and down the state. It's a sizable 20 percent increase from just two years ago, and helped them sign up nearly 80,000 new Democratic voters in the 13 targeted Assembly districts where Democrats are locked in tight races. In three Senate districts with similarly close contests, Senate Democrats picked up the bill this year, spending \$600,000 to notch up registration in the 5th, 7th and 21st state Senate districts. That effort yielded an addition of nearly 50,000 Demo-

cratic voters in those three districts.

Meanwhile, the GOP has concentrated some of its vote-gathering efforts in the hands of Mike Arno, co-owner of Arno Political Consultants, who is considered the pioneer of voter registration drives. In 1981, when postcard registration was legalized, he pitched his services to the and persuaded it to pay his firm to help bolster GOP voter registration statewide.

For the last 21 years, Arno has helped enlist new Republican voters, employing a medley of students, retirees and others, who earn \$5 apiece for every Republican registration they turn in. Arno expects his firm will be responsible for registering some 100,000 GOP voters this year, still a far cry from his high of half a million in 1986 when President Ronald Reagan attracted droves of Californians to the GOP.

These efforts have intensified in the last decade as voters have shied away from aligning themselves with either major party and Californians increasingly shun the

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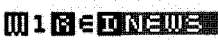
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polling booth altogether. More often than not, those who fill out new registration cards are doing so because they've moved, not because they are first-time voters.

Registration once was a surefire predictor of the final outcome in a legislative or a congressional race. As recently as 10 years ago, Republicans could count on a victory at the polls if their registration numbers exceeded or were within striking distance of Democrats. But those days have disappeared as voters in both parties no longer always vote a straight party ticket.

"Ticket splitting is enormous now," said Jamie Fisfis, a political strategist with the California Republican Party. Party loyalty takes a back seat today, he says. "Candidates need to understand local issues," Fisfis emphasized, "or all the registration in the world won't do any good."

But still, Republicans and Democrats alike say they can't afford to give up the quest. Although there's no rule of thumb, the Republican National Committee tracked voting patterns of newly registered voters two years ago and found that roughly 50 percent showed up at the polls, enough to give them hope that their registration efforts are not in vain.

A few try to cheat

Mounting large-scale voter registration drives is not without its problems, however. The greater the financial incentive, the more likely workers will be tempted to cheat,

says Arno, a veteran of registration drives. "I wish I could say it was just the Democrats, but [cheating] has happened equally in both parties." Despite this, Arno says his experience shows the number of people who try and forge registration cards is small.

Fraudulent registrations not only embarrass party officials, but also undercut the investment made in voter registration drives. Consequently, both parties say they take great care to verify all registration cards they collect. Hence, workers are often paid extra for registration cards turned in with a voter's phone number, which aids in follow-up verification. Two years ago, Democrats were chagrined when registration gatherers in Pasadena and Glendale turned in fake names resulting in as many as 16,000 bogus registrations, according to some estimates.

In the last two years, Secretary of State Bill Jones' office has assisted in the prosecution of six individuals who were sentenced to a combined 13 years in prison for falsifying voter registration cards. Although the U.S. Supreme Court has sanctioned paying workers to recruit new voters, Jones has long frowned on financial incentives for voter registration. He tried passing legislation in 1995 and again in 1997 to outlaw bounties, but the measures were quashed each time when both parties objected.

And so bounty hunting continues today. In the 43rd and 44th Assembly districts — the very same Burbank, Glendale and Pasadena areas where large-scale registra-



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tion fraud took place two years ago — Democrats and Republicans this year worked feverishly to widen their registration pool. While Democrats hired a fleet of workers paid on an hourly basis, Republican registration workers fetched record-high bounties of \$10 per registration card.

Republican appetite for voters is ravenous in these Assembly districts, which saw GOP numbers tumble during the last decade as a wave of immigrants moved into the area. The political stakes for Republicans were high in this region, from the political hotseat of Congressman Rogan, fighting to retain his congressional perch, to the nested Assembly seats where Craig Missakian and Susan Carpenter-McMillan were locked in tight Assembly races.

Monty Floyd, who directs the local GOP PAC assigned to prop up Republican registration, expected his workers to sign up as many as 18,000 voters before the close of the registration season. It's an uphill battle in that corner of Southern California where 48 percent of registered voters were once aligned with Republicans, but today only 37 percent affiliate with the party. Floyd was determined to turn those numbers around before Election Day by keeping the heat up on the search for new party prospects. In one week in September his office paid out \$20,000 in bounties. To his delight, he received checks the following week from two corporate political contributors, one kicking in \$9,000 and the other \$7,000 to keep the registration pace going.

Prospects harder to find

Legislation passed five years ago that enables voters to

automatically re-register at the Department of Motor Vehicles when renewing their driver's license has netted more than 7 million registrations. As a result, finding registration prospects has become even harder.

But for those with the tenacity to endure long stretches standing on their feet and more than a few cold snubs from the public, the financial rewards can be satisfactory. David Fudoli, a former restaurant manager, drives 30 miles from his home six days a week in the San Fernando Valley to work for the Strickland effort. For nearly two months, he averaged five to eight Republican registrations an hour working seven hours a day. A 40-year-old college student, Fudoli set up shop at malls and turned on his charm. "You have to have thick skin for this kind of work," he said. "I believe I earn every penny."

Strategists in both parties concur that the hunt for new registrations operates on a political wing and a prayer. With voting behavior increasingly hard to predict, there's no guarantee that bounty money is worth the price. Making sure that newly minted voters go to the polls is as important as signing them up in the first place, according to Democratic consultant Darryl Sragow.

"You better be going through this trouble because you'll get people who will go out and vote," he said. "You can't just register to pump up your numbers or you're just throwing money away." 🏠

Kathleen Les is an associate editor of California Journal.

Comments may be sent to edit@statenet.com.

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Home on the Range with Lady Bird Johnson

TONEWALL, TX — Set foot on this piece of Hill Country, Texas, — the sprawling, 2,800-acre, oak-studded ranch that former President Lyndon Baines Johnson called home — and you step into a place where pieces of this country's political past and present meld seamlessly.

Johnson's roots go deep here. It is a place, he said, "where people know when you are sick, love you while you are alive, and miss you when you die."

Although LBJ passed away nearly a quarter-century ago, many reminders remain of the life he relished here. Among them, the wide open countryside famous for its spring wildflower displays, the smooth-flowing Pedernales River and the working ranch that still boasts 100 head of Hereford cattle, horses, bison, Texas longhorns, white-tailed deer and black buck antelopes from India.

The LBJ Ranch is still home to Johnson's widow, the former Claudia Alta Taylor, known to most Americans as "Lady Bird," a nickname she acquired from a nursemaid when she was only 2 years old.

"I've called this home longer than any place else," said Lady Bird, who, on a sunny Saturday in September, graciously opened her family home to about two dozen visiting newspaper editors and their spouses. She greeted everyone personally, displaying her famous Southern hospitality. "Awful glad you came," she said, in her slight Texas drawl. "Make yourself at home."

Now 87 years old, Lady Bird has lost much of her sight due to macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness in older adults, said Liz Carpenter, her longtime friend and former press secretary.

But Lady Bird doesn't like to openly acknowledge her failing eyesight, said Carpenter, who joined editors for dinner the night before in Austin. She gets around her home and parts of the ranch mainly by memory and with help from her aides.

Looking serene and at ease, Lady Bird sat under a tangled oak tree that Saturday, sipping lemonade with visitors outside her white, ivy-covered, ranch-style home. She wore dark glasses, which she removed for photographs, between chats about her life before, during and after LBJ.

Lady Bird, a former reporter, said she kept a diary while at the White House because she thought "I'm the only person who's going to see it from this

vantage point." She said her journals, which were published as a book called "White House Diary" in 1970, have been very helpful in remembering details of her husband's time in the Oval Office. "It's almost a reference book for me," she said.

Once painfully shy, Lady Bird spoke of her growing influence on President Johnson — how her impressions of meeting poor, disadvantaged children across the country had a big impact on his War-on-Poverty programs, such as Head Start, the preschool program for low-income children.

She also recounted her pet cause, the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, and her assessment of its effectiveness. "I think we're doing better," said Lady Bird, who remains active in environmental causes. "It takes an aroused elec-

torate expressing their views. I love this place. I want this place to look as beautiful for my grandchildren."

The family home, with its stone fireplace, was built in the early 1900s by German immigrants and purchased in 1908 by LBJ's uncle and aunt. "Lyndon knew this home since he was 4 years old," she said.

Indeed, the home has quite a history. After all, its "West Room" was where one of her daughters, Luci Baines Johnson, was married. It is filled with

family pictures of Lady Bird's husband, her two daughters, their husbands, her seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, all of whom celebrate every Christmas together at the ranch. In the back of the home are swings and slides for the grandkids.

As for politics, Lady Bird says she no longer gets involved, except to tell folks: "I hope by God that everyone votes."

But that's not to say she doesn't have opinions about this year's presidential election.

When asked if she thought it was time for another Texan to be president, Lady Bird paused as her aide tried to give her a graceful out by gently tugging her away, saying "It's time for lunch."

But Lady Bird turned and said, "I'm not afraid to respond to that question, in this way. I have great admiration and affection for the Bush family," she said. "But I am a forever Democrat."

Lady Bird, ever gracious. No longer shy. 🏠

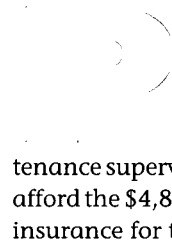
CJ Senior Editor Emelyn Rodriguez conducted this interview while traveling in Texas with the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Comments may be sent to edit@statenet.com.

By Emelyn Rodriguez



Lady Bird Johnson

Campaigning on health care: Are promises enough?

 Pat and Tommie Tyler work full-time jobs—and are uninsured. They support two teenage sons and provide for a nephew. She's a grass-roots community organizer, he's a maintenance supervisor. Together they make \$36,000 a year but can't afford the \$4,800 yearly price tag for employer-subsidized health insurance for their family.

The San Bernardino couple, both in their mid-40s, suffer health problems. Pat has high blood pressure and Tommie, who survived two heart attacks, has occasional chest pains. Because money is tight, they ration their health care, only going to the doctor when absolutely necessary, and only when they can afford it. Meanwhile, they worry about the risk they are taking

As Gore and Bush debated the details, California's working families continued fretting over health care coverage they can't afford.

By Emelyn Rodriguez

by sacrificing health coverage for themselves and their children. And they worry about being unable to afford medical emergencies or being wiped out financially by a catastrophic illness.

"We take over-the-counter medicine and we pray," said Pat Tyler, who says that health care is her No. 1 issue at the ballot box. "I have to make choices about who goes to the doctor and when we go, because we have to eat and we have to have a roof over our heads."

This election cycle saw health care emerge as a prominent campaign issue nationally and in California, with the problem of the uninsured ranking high on many voters' minds, according to surveys. This year, education and health care were the two top issues for California voters deciding whom to support in the presidential election, according to a recent Field Institute poll commissioned by the California HealthCare Foundation.

In California, where hundreds daily join the ranks of the state's 6.9 million uninsured, many struggle to afford the basics: routine check-ups, prescription drugs, emergency hospital care. It's a troubling trend that persists despite the best economy in



Illustration by Tim Brinton

three decades, record low unemployment and a growing concern that too many people, especially children, lack basic health services. And despite recent U.S. Census Bureau figures showing 1.7 million fewer Americans without health coverage than in 1987, most agree that the number

of uninsured remains unacceptably high.

The problem is especially pernicious in the Golden State, which has the largest proportion of uninsured residents in the country: 1 in 6 of the 42.6 million Americans without health coverage lives in California. Almost half of

The problem is especially pernicious in the State, which has the largest proportion of uninsured residents in



all Californians have been affected by this problem, according to the California HealthCare Foundation. Forty-five percent of all California adults and 39 percent of the state's registered voters were without insurance at some point during the

past two years, or reported being financially responsible for someone without insurance, the survey found. The problem was more prevalent among non-voters and Latinos.

But neither major party presidential candidate this year offered bold or sweeping proposals to solve the uninsured dilemma. Although both Republican Texas Governor George W. Bush and Democratic Vice President Al Gore placed health issues high on their list of priorities, the problem of the uninsured was largely eclipsed by the debate over Medicare and prescription drug coverage.

"Health care is at the forefront in the presidential campaign and [was a] prominent topic in the debates," said Drew Altman, president and CEO of the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. "However, the No. 1 health issue is expanding prescription drug coverage and Medicare." The reason for this was obvious, Altman said. Seniors are a critical swing vote, with 90 percent of them historically going to the ballot box; by contrast, fewer than half of those who are uninsured tend to vote. Plus, the problem of the uninsured is complex and costly to resolve. For both political and financial reasons, the problem of the uninsured was "up there but not at the front," he said.

While the problem of the uninsured continues to grow, proposals to tackle it this year were neither as bold nor as ambitious as in previous campaigns. After all, President Clinton rode the health care issue to the White House, promising to deliver universal health coverage for all Americans. But his plan to require employer-mandated coverage met a high-profile demise.

Former President George Bush, who lost to Clinton in 1992, also proposed more generous plans than either of this year's major party candidates. He offered \$3,750 refundable federal health insurance credits or vouchers for the poor, as well as sizeable tax deductions for the middle class.

In comparison, what George W. Bush and Gore proposed were smaller, incremental, bite-sized approaches to the problem.

Politicians have followed this trend since the colossal failure of the Clinton health plan. Most political office seekers have shied away from such sweeping proposals

because one lesson learned from the Clinton health reform debacle was that comprehensive solutions were too tough to sell, said Lucien Wulsin, project director with Insure the Uninsured Project.

While many Americans would like the problem of the uninsured solved, many are skeptical about big government solutions and don't want to pay too much to do it, Wulsin said. "I think politicians of all stripes remain cautious in the face of that experience," he added. "The candidates are responding with some caution because of the failure of the past and difficulty in designing incremental policies that don't bust the bank and have some real effectiveness."

While both the Bush and Gore plans had common elements — such as tax credits to encourage individuals to buy insurance coverage and programs that targeted uninsured children and uninsured workers in small businesses — their differing approaches highlighted sharply contrasting philosophies.

Bush relied heavily on the marketplace and private insurance with his plan for health credits and medical savings accounts to help more Americans afford health insurance. Gore focused on expanding government programs, such as the 1997 federal-state Children's Health Insurance Program, a plan for low-income families who don't qualify for Medicaid (the state/federal health insurance program for the poor) but can't afford insurance on their own.

Bush proposed \$35 billion in refundable health credits — a maximum of \$1,000 per person or \$2,000 per family that would cover up to 90 percent of the cost of health insurance — to help those on low and moderate incomes buy private health coverage. (Tax credits would be phased out as a family's income rose above \$60,000.) He also offered to relax federal regulations and give states more flexibility in tailoring their versions of the federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in order to maximize coverage. He called for the creation of association health plans, which would require a change in the law to allow small businesses to lower insurance costs by banding together across state lines to purchase insurance from such groups as the Chamber of Commerce or the National Federation of Independent Businesses. He called for expanding and reforming medical savings accounts, which are tax-free accounts for medical expenses. And he also proposed spending \$3.6 billion nationwide over five years to establish up to 1,200 community and migrant health centers, which provide a safety net for the uninsured.

Bush spokesman Ray Sullivan said the governor's

Golden

the country.

proposals, which combined health care credits with improvements in the CHIP program, would make insurance "more affordable for more people" by lowering costs for small businesses and families.

Gore, whose goal was to provide health insurance coverage for every child by 2005 and to eventually provide universal health coverage for all Americans, proposed increasing income eligibility for the Children's Health Insurance Program to families earning up to 250 percent of the poverty level (or about \$43,000 a year for a family of four) so that more children, and eventually more parents, can qualify. The proposal would cost \$95 billion over 10 years. He called for a plan to allow those between the ages of 55 and 64 — the fastest growing group of uninsured in the country — to buy into Medicare. And he proposed a 25 percent tax credit for families with higher incomes that buy into the CHIP program (paying the full premium) and a 25 percent tax credit for health insurance premiums paid by employees of small businesses that join purchasing coalitions to negotiate better rates.

"The Vice President has stated that universal coverage is something to work towards, but it must be phased in and it must be done in a responsible manner," said Gore spokeswoman Maria Meier. "He wants to be realistic in his

approach and doesn't want to do something that's not going to work, even if it means taking a smaller step."

Health care experts, however, pointed out that each plan targeted different segments of the population and stressed that neither proposal could have significantly reduced the number of uninsured Americans. Experts said tax credits or rebates for those who buy health coverage on their own will likely help more moderate income families (according to some estimates those earning between \$40,000 to \$50,000) by cutting premium costs. However, a number of studies suggest that lower income families and the working poor would benefit more from expanding government programs since insurance premiums would remain unaffordable for these families even with tax credits or rebates.

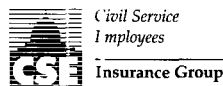
"(A tax credit) doesn't deal with the issue of month-to-month cash flow for families or for small businesses," said Beth Capell, chief lobbyist with Health Access California, a consumer group. "You still have to lay out the cash every month to buy the coverage."

The Bush and Gore plans merely nibbled around the edges, said Paul Fronstin, a senior research associate with the non-partisan Employee Benefit Research Institute, who conducted a study of the Bush and Gore health policy proposals. His report concluded that the plans "are unlikely to have a substantial impact on the number of uninsured Americans."

"Both plans have their strengths and weaknesses,"

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Neither major party presidential candidate this year offered bold or sweeping proposals to solve the uninsured dilemma.

onstin said. "However, the major shortcoming of both plans is the failure to address affordability for what is considered an average health benefits package."

For instance, under the Gore tax credit proposal, only 25 percent of the cost of coverage would have been tax deductible, regardless of the cost of the plan purchased, he said. The Bush plan, with a maximum \$2,000 tax credit, would have only covered the cost of "bare-bones" health plans.

Although there is increasing support across the political spectrum – from Representative Dick Armey (R-TX) on the right to Representative Pete Stark (D-CA) on the left — for using federal tax credits to expand health care coverage, a study commissioned by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation concluded that "the ability of tax subsidies to greatly reduce the number of uninsured persons remains uncertain and unproven."

The study, conducted by researchers Jonathan Gruber, professor of economics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Larry Levitt, director of the Kaiser Family Foundation's Changing Health Care Marketplace Project, found that even a large refundable tax credit costing \$13 billion a year would reduce the ranks of the uninsured by only four million.

Altman, president of the Kaiser Family Foundation, said that a combination of tax credits and expansion of government programs would be needed to sharply reduce the uninsured population.

"If you want to make a significant dent, you must do both approaches at the same time," he said. "In general, each candidate is talking about an approach that will cover between 4 to 10 million of the uninsured."

While a federal plan was being debated, California legislators also searched for a solution. Lawmakers recently passed legislation that would allow the Healthy Families program (the state's version of CHIP), which currently only covers children, to expand to include 600,000 low-income parents.

But in the flurry of the legislative session's closing hours, lawmakers failed to pass a separate measure to pay for the plan, putting in jeopardy \$590 million in federal funds – roughly 69 percent of the state's allotment to provide health care for low-income children. This put Governor Gray Davis in the position of asking President

Clinton's help in retaining the funds. Senator Dianne Feinstein, who had introduced legislation to expand the CHIP program to include low-income parents, also worked with colleagues in Congress to get an extension on keeping the federal funds. Given the lack of legislation to pay for the program, Davis said he intended to fund the state's share, about \$128 million, on his own authority by setting aside money in the budget he will unveil in January.

"Enrollment for Medi-Cal and Healthy Families will climb dramatically once you get parents into the system," predicted Jim Keddy, director of The PICO California Project, a faith-based network representing 300,000 families and 350 congregations statewide that has campaigned extensively for solutions to California's uninsured problem. "The fight for universal coverage is going to happen one step at a time," he said. "That's just the political reality."

But for those like Dagoberto Lopez of Oakland, who long ago gave up hopes of seeing any comprehensive solution, any proposal that offers some financial relief is welcome news.

Lopez, like the vast majority (80 percent) of the uninsured in California, is employed. But the 34-year-old property maintenance manager makes \$26,000 a year and can't afford the \$6,000-a-year price tag for private health insurance for his wife and three children. To make ends meet, his wife works part-time cleaning homes, bringing in an additional \$12,000 each year.

"Anything will help," he said, expressing despair after a spate of unexpected medical expenses, ranging from antibiotics for his 4-month-old daughter to emergency care for his 14-year-old son's kidney infection. The medical bills drained his already strained finances. "It's not like we want health care for free," he said. "We work. We just want something that's affordable."

Like the Tylers, the Lopez family took their concerns to the ballot box, casting their votes based on whom, in their estimation, offered the best solution to health coverage.

"I hope something can be done soon to help all these families in our situation," Lopez said. 🏠

Emelyn Rodriguez, senior editor of California Journal, wrote this piece as part of a joint venture between KVIE Channel 6, The Sacramento Bee, The California Healthcare Foundation and the PBS Democracy Project to promote discussion of health care issues in the November election. A version of this article appeared in The Bee. Comments may be sent to edit@statenet.com.

Web site overlooked

In the *California Journal's* list of political Web sites ("The Web & Politics," September 2000), the site with the most extensive information on local candidates in California was overlooked. www.SmartVoter.org, the online election guide of the League of Women Voters of California has served California voters since 1996 with statewide and local candidate profiles and ballot measures.

SmartVoter builds upon the League's tradition of providing nonpartisan information. The depth of information on issues (for example, the "pros and cons" on statewide ballot propositions) satisfies political junkies; however, the easy-to-understand "My Ballot" helps young and first-time voters easily understand their choices. Based on a voter's address, a customized ballot is produced of all the candidates and measures in that precinct. Polling place locations and maps answer the frequently asked question: "Where do I vote?" And many voters return after the elections to obtain results in local contests.

SmartVoter also is a portal to the best of the Web on elections. Links abound to connect the voter with the information they need.

Please add www.SmartVoter.org to the list of Web sites that make a difference. Finding election information for Californians has never been easier.

Trudell Een, Project Director
League of Women Voters of California

Praising Prop. 39

I was very appreciative of the November initiative rundown in the September issue of *California Journal*. The article was well balanced and gave voters valuable information to help them sort out the numerous initiatives they will face.

I would like to give your readers some additional information concerning Proposition 39 [which would lower the vote threshold on school bonds]. Along with the accountability features you highlighted there are other important accountability provisions that will go into effect, include the requirement of two annual audits – one fiscal, one performance – throughout the life of the bond, citizen oversight committees to ensure bond funds are spent as voters intended and, most importantly, a cap on the amount property taxes can be raised.

These extra protections are necessary to assure taxpayers and homeowners that their investments in local schools will be spent properly.

J. Patrick Luby, Legislative Representative
American Association of Retired Persons

Thank you for the informative article concerning the ballot measures facing California voters

this November. The objective analysis of each initiative provided by *California Journal* writers is extremely helpful to voters who wish to make well-informed decisions when voting on these issues.

Please note, however, that several crucial supporters of Proposition 39 were not mentioned.

These include senior citizen organizations such as AARP, the Older Women's League and the Congress of California Seniors and key education leaders such as the California State PTA. The California Chamber of Commerce, as well as numerous local chambers, also strongly support the initiative. Each of the organizations has its own concerns, but they all agree about the need to help local school districts pass school facilities bond measures in order to fix our schools, build new classrooms and improve education opportunities for California's children, while at the same time providing accountability to and protection for taxpayers.

Ann Desmond, Director of Legislation
California State PTA

letters

Election results? "Click here"

Your civic duty's done, the ballots are counted and it's time to review the winners and losers. So who did grab that Assembly seat in Orange County? What's the outcome of the slow-growth measure in San Diego? Did the Green Party pull off another Assembly upset in Oakland? Was it Democrats or Republicans who tipped the congressional scales?

The answers are at your fingertips from a number of Web sites offering election results. Here's a sampling:

www.ss.ca.gov — As the California Secretary of State's official Web page, this site posts election results within minutes after the polls close. It offers statewide totals for president and U.S. Senate candidates, district-by-district results from every congressional, Assembly and Senate race, plus the outcome of all eight ballot propositions.

www.Smartvoter.com — Sponsored by the League of Women Voters, "Smartvoter" delivers statewide and local election results, from school board races to judicial contests, in major communities throughout California. Log onto "Your Ballot" for a customized list of electoral outcomes in 21 of the state's most populated counties. Also provided are links to every county's election office, as well as numerous election-related web sites.

www.statenet.com — The parent company of *California Journal*, StateNet extends its election coverage far beyond California's borders, providing comprehensive results in all 50 states. The site includes a breakdown of each state's officeholders – congressional, legislative and statewide – by party, gender and whether the seat is open or uncontested. It also lists each state's ballot initiatives.

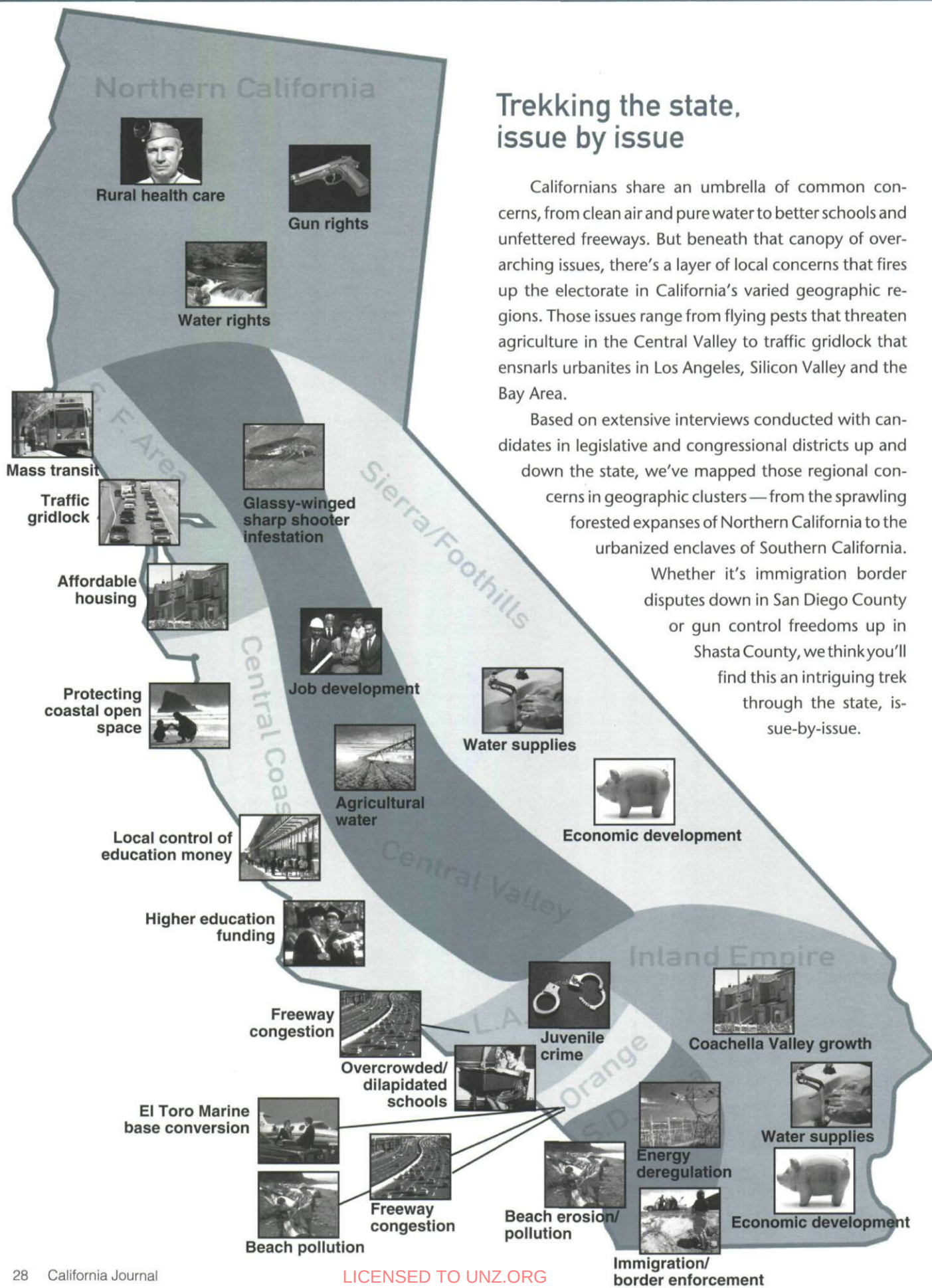
What's on the minds of Californians

Trekking the state, issue by issue

Californians share an umbrella of common concerns, from clean air and pure water to better schools and unfettered freeways. But beneath that canopy of overarching issues, there's a layer of local concerns that fires up the electorate in California's varied geographic regions. Those issues range from flying pests that threaten agriculture in the Central Valley to traffic gridlock that ensnarls urbanites in Los Angeles, Silicon Valley and the Bay Area.

Based on extensive interviews conducted with candidates in legislative and congressional districts up and down the state, we've mapped those regional concerns in geographic clusters — from the sprawling forested expanses of Northern California to the urbanized enclaves of Southern California.

Whether it's immigration border disputes down in San Diego County or gun control freedoms up in Shasta County, we think you'll find this an intriguing trek through the state, issue-by-issue.



In preparing last month's pre-election analysis, *California Journal's* team of political editors fanned out — by phone and e-mail — across the state. But this year we added a new twist to our traditional election coverage: key issues.

In dozens of interviews around the state, we took the political pulse of every congressional, Senate and Assembly district, asking candidates, campaign staffers and consultants for their take on the hot topics in their district.

The response we got was refreshing. "This is the first time anyone's ever asked me about issues," said one veteran Assembly staffer, sounding incredulous.

In response, some sent reams of paper and a flurry of faxes. Others talked and talked. And while a few spit out pat and predictable answers, others chewed thoughtfully.

In digesting it all, we found that there are big-picture

issues that occupy the minds of most voters (See "Top Ten Issues," which are ranked in order of most responses, below). In almost every interview, whether it was among ardent Democrats or hard-core Republicans, education topped the charts. Health care, a topic that dominated this year's presidential race, ran close behind.

But, as you'll see on the page opposite, those issues meant different things in different places. In sprawling Northern California, health care meant relieving a doctor shortage in rural areas where residents are faced with long drives to distant clinics. Along the Central Coast, education meant securing funding for community colleges and university campuses. Down in Los Angeles, where some of the state's most crowded, dilapidated schools yield some of the lowest test scores, education translates into shoring up aging facilities — to a degree that eclipsed all other regions.

Water, the seventh-most-mentioned overall topic, also flowed in different directions. In the Inland Empire, home to the booming bedroom communities of Riverside and San Bernardino, it's a supply-side issue, as communities find tapping a steady source of water for future development remains as difficult as a dripping faucet. But in water-rich Northern California, the sacred issue is preserving water rights, holding onto the region's liquid treasure. Again, it's all a matter of perspective.

And some topics were unique to just one region. In San Diego, where residents have been saddled with check-book-choking electric bills, energy deregulation was on everyone's lips. In Los Angeles, some inner-city Assembly districts were the only locales in California where deterring juvenile crime cropped up often as a local concern.

Interestingly, and perhaps a portent for GOP message-bearers, tax cuts and gun control were mentioned only rarely. Only in Northern California, one of the state's last frontiers, did gun rights fire up as a campaign topic.

While by no means a scientific sampling, our survey did reveal a general sense of what's nibbling at the hearts and minds of voters. We trust you'll find it food for thought.

— CJ Editors

Top 10 Issues



1. Education



2. Health care



3. Transportation



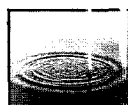
4. Environment



5. Economic development



6. Public safety



7. Water



8. Growth/sprawl



9. Affordable housing



10. Social Security

Ranked in order of most responses

Next month: CJ's district-by-district analysis of the results of the November election.

Deliverance from

Despite a year in which virtually everyone from right to left has professed earnest support for serious campaign finance reform, attempts to rid our political system of the corrosive and corrupting influence of big money have yielded only the most negligible of results. Personally, I have no solution to offer.

However, from time to time, I do channel messages from a long-deceased member of the O'Connell clan who, in death as in life, survives by filching scraps from the trash bin of Jonathan Swift, the 18th-century Irish clergyman and political sage who authored "Gulliver's Travels" as well as other social commentaries.

Of late, my enterprising, if eternally ill-nourished, clansman has stumbled upon Swift's discarded musings on the "lamentable conjunction of money, politics, and elections in America." As we shall see, Swift seems especially well-informed about public affairs in California, a land he calls "that singular Avatar of Americana."

So, without further delay, here is how the illustrious dean would have us sever, once and for all, the chains that bind money and politics today as securely as did the bonds the Lilliputians wove to ensnare the unfortunate Captain Lemuel Gulliver nearly 300 years ago.

**Down from the ages, a political sage offers
Californians a radical cure for that
modern-day malady known as campaigning.**

By Jock O'Connell

Time has obviously made you Americans a remarkably timid lot. For a people who, in my age, brashly threw off the bonds of tyranny and set out to tame a continent, you now appear singularly incapable of freeing your political institutions of the dictatorship of dollars. Even in that wondrous, sunlit upland known as California, voters have consistently shirked their responsibility for insulating the conduct of the public's business from the domineering hand of powerful interests, whose seemingly bottomless satchels of loot have become so profound a distraction to those who tread the halls of government.

The problem, as I view it from my current spectral perch, is that you have been much too tentative in addressing an issue that requires the administration of a broad axe.

If history reveals any lesson, it is that the partial correctives you have embraced in the past — term limits, campaign finance laws, bans on corporate donations — only seem to have tested the scoundrels' capacity for ingenuity and deceit. The more laws you

elections

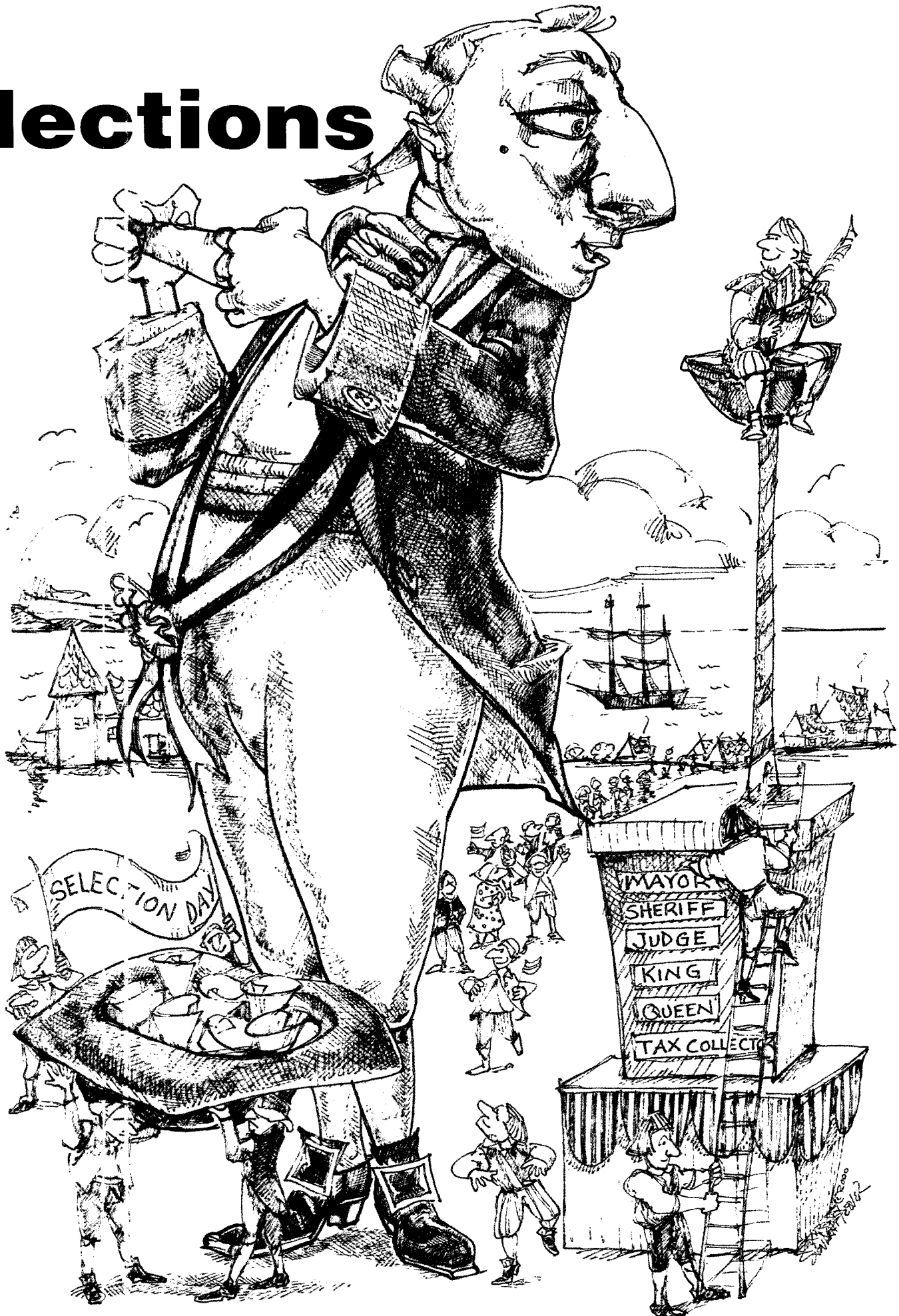


Illustration by Sandra Hoover

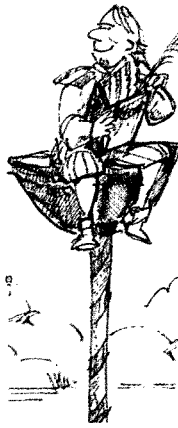
have enacted, the more venal and corrupt the political system has become.

Clearly, then, nothing is to be gained from further restrictions of how much money candidates are permitted to amass or dispense. Such fetters are futile. If you are sincerely interested in saving your system of representative government from a legion of widely lamented curses, it is time to consider the very simple but effective expedient which I have in mind: abolish elections!

Before you recoil in horror, give my proposal a moment of dispassionate thought. Only the meager few among you who actually vote on a regular basis would likely object. By contrast, the great majority of you would be more apt to celebrate the end of the innumerable annoyances, indignities, and affronts associated with electoral campaigns.

My modest recommendation stands in stark contrast to your more recent gestures aimed at enhancing your system of representative govern-

I beg you to give ample consideration to the sundry, ancillary virtues of abolishing elections outright.



ment, especially those measures affecting term limits and campaign finances. The former were intended to deny political life everlasting to your duly elected leaders, irrespective of the actual wishes of their constituents. Alas, this bromide has evidently resurrected more ghosts than were put to rest. Far from periodically cleansing your elective bodies, term limits have given rise to an eerie transmigration of souls to other, usually more elevated, offices where presumably greater damage can be inflicted.

I am likewise baffled by your ambiguous gestures toward campaign finance reform. As I comprehend it, many among you uphold the singularly American notion that the act of tendering largess to politicians, far from constituting *prima facie* evidence of bribery, is instead an expression of free speech. This being the case, you would afford such inducements and subversions the full protection of the First Amendment to your esteemed Constitution.

As one who has periodically taken pen to hand, I am naturally chagrined at how our common language is being repeatedly abused by your colonial tongue. Free speech? Preposterous. In California, I am informed, the charge for attending a private fete at which one might be permitted to grovel before the provincial chief magistrate can exceed what would be needed to feed an entire village for a whole year. Surely, when speech grows that expensive, it can hardly be regarded as free.

I beg you to give ample consideration to the sundry, ancillary virtues of abolishing elections outright. Behold: Without elections, there would be no feckless candidates and no political campaigns insinuating themselves into private homes and busi-

nesses in the quest for donations and votes.

Gone would be the noisome barrages of political advertisements crowding out the truly entertaining commercials during your television and radio broadcasts. A fatal blow would likewise be struck at that alchemist's cabal of political pundits and editorialists who now conspire to render tedious and utterly predictable that which should be inherently dramatic and compelling.

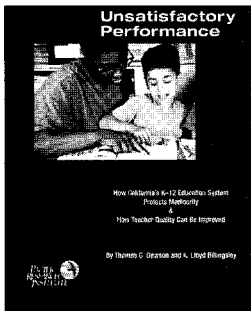
Above all, countless citizens would be spared the guilt of not attending studiously to the parade of issues and candidates. Instead, they would be granted the greatest freedom of all — that of pursuing their private lives blissfully ignorant of public affairs!

Now let me anticipate your concerns. You will want to know how to parry the objections of skeptics who will doubtless complain that representative government is not something with which to trifle. Blunt their attacks, my friends, by requiring them to demonstrate precisely what representative government and the holding of periodic elections have to do with one another. As your legislative bodies have so richly demonstrated over the years, elections have exceedingly little to do with representing the public's interest. Indeed, for much of your history, the numerical majority of the public was officially discouraged from being represented in your legislatures and councils.

How then, you inquire, would representative government be safeguarded in the absence of periodic elections? Fortunately, you in California have already devised the ideal alternative to elections as a means of choosing real people to conduct the people's business. I speak, naturally, of the Super Lotto.

Unsatisfactory Performance:

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Pacific Research Institute's new study focuses on California teacher salaries, tenure and dismissal, and the impact of collective bargaining on the public school system.

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If galvanizing the citizenry's attention is what one desires, mere electoral contests pale in comparison with a lottery promising the instant bestowal of unimaginable wealth. In the place of a dreaded General Election, you would hold instead a festive Selection Day. Instead of enduring the expense, audacity, and civic outrages of the seemingly endless electoral process, you would on this single, joyous day so rich with anticipation populate all of your governmental offices, from governor down to local councils, with citizens picked completely at random from the most comprehensive slate of candidates known to exist — that, of course, being the roster of Californians who have received written assurance of being Grand Prize Finalists in the next Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes.

Under my plan, a citizen, if chosen, would be obliged to serve a term of perhaps seven years in office. Absolutely no one would be excused. Those insistent on foregoing public service would be required to serve a commensurate period lodged in accommodations provided, say, in a certain walled community in the City of Folsom.

Befitting a lottery, ample material rewards would go to those selected to serve in public office. If only to mitigate against corruption, the chosen few would receive a tax-free salary of \$1 million a year while in office. They would also be assured a generous pension, as well as comprehensive, non-EMO health care with full prescription drug benefits for life.

But you ask: Who are these people? What qualifies them for public office? Well, gaze about you. Who are the people now in office? What other than an ample dose of panache, a soupcon of arrogance, and a calloused sense of self-respect qualifies them for public service? Who among you has not plaintively wondered why a land so fertile in nearly every respect has turned so barren when asked to produce inspired political leadership?

I dare say my proposal would provide for a much more interesting and representative government than you have now. People from all walks of life, age groups, genders, ethnic back-

grounds, religious and moral persuasions, personal quirks, intellectual predispositions and physical appearance would be included. Your republican ideals would be reborn!

This, then, is my modest proposal. I pray you will adopt it. However, should you believe my scheme to be too radical or unwieldy, let me suggest a less draconian but still superior method of selecting your public offi-

cials. It is a procedure that involves, metaphorically speaking, the use of a small stone, a sheaf of parchment, and a pair of shears. 🏰

Jock O'Connell, an international business consultant based in Sacramento, also writes commentaries for The Los Angeles Times and The Sacramento Bee. Comments may be sent to edit@statenet.com.

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If only California were in play

It is terrible for California that the presidential campaign has once again passed the state by. Terrible for California reporters, that is. That's because there is a direct relationship between the time it takes campaign staff to return a reporter's phone call and the closeness of the state's public opinion polls.

Want to see an interview with George W. Bush? Read it in the *Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch*. Curious about Al Gore's energy views? Find them in the *Ann Arbor (Michigan) News*.

But as Golden State scribes decry the injustice of watching the closest presidential contest in a generation from the sidelines, it is an entirely different matter whether it makes any difference to most Californians.

Should anyone care that the next president spent more of his time in Parma than Pasadena? Does staging an event in Ypsilanti, not Yreka, have any effect on the state's interests?

The answer is that it probably *does* matter. But not as much as the press would have you believe.

Take guns. California voters have made plain their disdain for assault weapons, Saturday night specials, and the influence of the gun lobby.

U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein predicted that guns would be a defining issue of the 2000 campaign. After all, the differences could not be more stark. Gore cast a tie-breaking vote in the U.S. Senate to advance gun control legislation, while Bush signed a bill to permit Texans to carry concealed weapons.

Yet Gore was mostly silent on the topic of gun control. During the second presidential debate, he politely explained his support for licensing new gun owners and requiring mandatory child safety locks. But he did little else to call attention to the matter.

An explanation can be found by looking at the electoral map. Gun control is popular in California, New York (city, that is) and the Northeast, where Gore has always held a commanding lead. But it is not so obviously a winning issue in the Midwest, where polls consistently showed Gore neck-and-neck with Bush. Voters there show far more interest in hunting and resistance to government limits on gun ownership.

The same argument can be made about edu-

cation, where California's high-profile battles over vouchers and bilingual education would have created a far more interesting debate than a squabble over which candidate's education plan requires more testing. Visas for high-tech workers, the next round of military base closings and the availability of electricity — all matters of concern to Californians — never made it onto the presidential radar screen.

Even preserving the environment, which Gore once said should be the "central organizing principle for civilization" received second-tier status on the campaign trail. Were California in play, a permanent ban on oil drilling off the California coast and calls for stricter emission controls would have been top campaign issues.

Could it be that in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania, such talk might turn off the working class? There is no question that a handful of Midwest states, along with Florida, Oregon and Washington, received an inordinate amount of attention from the candidates.

Yet no one need feel sorry for the state's voters. The electoral map is simply too large for a candidate to define his positions narrowly.

Take a look at Michigan, for instance, where no interest group is as influential as the unions. The

United Auto Workers, the AFL-CIO and the Teamsters bitterly opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Yet Bush and Gore did not hesitate to trumpet their strong free trade credentials throughout the campaign. Neither cowed to Michigan's protectionist sentiments even though the race was close.

For the most part, California's interests are the same as the rest of the nation: a strong economy, affordable health care and a secure retirement. It would be hard to argue that California gets ignored. Indeed, as long as Silicon Valley, Hollywood and the politically affluent from Belvedere to Bel Air continue to provide donations, California will not be ignored.

Nevertheless, I wish more Californians had told pollsters they planned to vote for Bush. I want my phone calls returned.

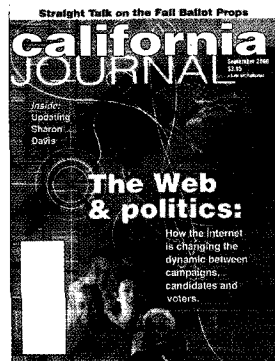
Contributing Editor Marc Sandalow is Washington Bureau Chief for the San Francisco Chronicle. Comments may be sent to edit@statenet.com.

By Marc Sandalow



California Journal

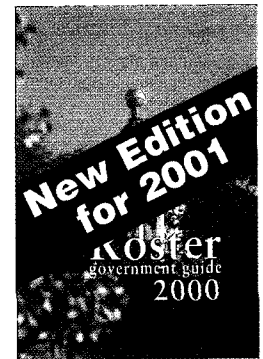
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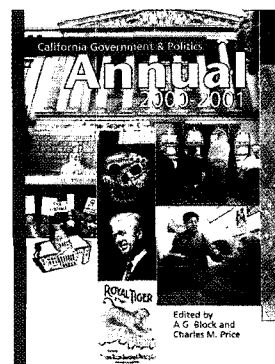
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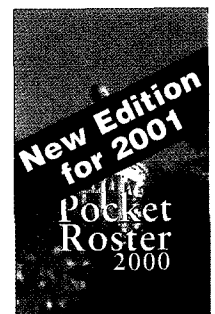
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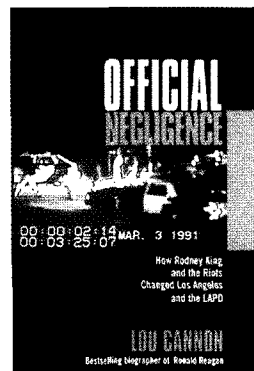
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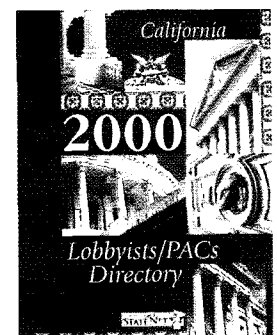
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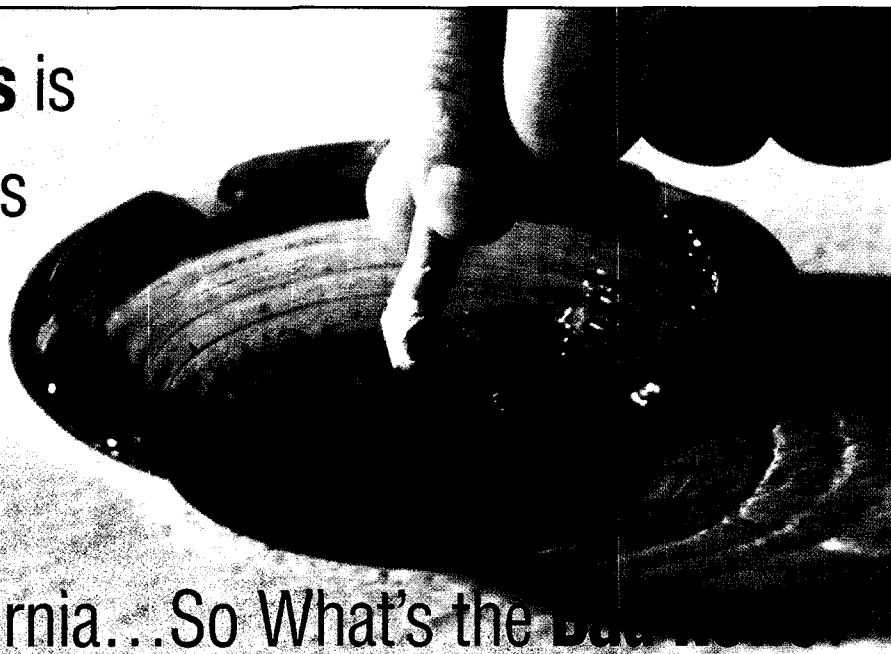
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The **Good News** is Opinion Leaders Agree with Tobacco Prevention Efforts in California... So What's the **Bad News**?



In a statewide survey, key opinion leaders — community leaders, elected officials, health workers and others — agree that California's tobacco policies are on the right track. In fact, leaders not only support what California has already done to curb tobacco use, they support more efforts and policies to reduce it even further.

The survey of more than 400 key opinion leaders across California was conducted by the American Lung Association as a "check-up" with the state's leadership to see whether the tobacco prevention policies of the last decade are supported and what new areas of tobacco policy should be addressed.

Here's the good and bad about what they said:

- **Good news:** 98 percent support fines for businesses that sell tobacco products — cigarettes, smokeless tobacco and cigars — to minors.
- **Bad news:** While California has a system of fines and penalties for retailers that sell tobacco to children, one in five retailers continues to illegally sell it to minors.
- **Good news:** 75 percent agree with prohibiting self-service tobacco product displays seen at check-out aisles to reduce easy access by children.
- **Bad news:** Only nine counties have ordinances to restrict self-service tobacco displays, and no state law exists to ban this kind of tobacco sales.
- **Good news:** 69 percent support the idea that stores that sell tobacco products should be licensed just like stores that sell liquor.



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- **Bad news:** There is no statewide, uniform law that requires retailers to obtain a license to sell tobacco — an addictive product responsible for more deaths than any legal product in California.
- **Good news:** 80 percent agree that local communities should reject tobacco industry sponsorship of sporting/cultural events, fairs, and other community activities in their areas.
- **Bad news:** Philip Morris has launched a reported \$100 million advertising and public relations campaign to position itself as a good corporate citizen and showcase its financial support of these kinds of community events in an effort to buy credibility.

It's encouraging to see that the vast majority of leaders believe we are headed in the right direction when it comes to ending the death and disease caused by tobacco use. The American Lung Association and others have waged an uphill battle against the tobacco industry and its wealth for decades, and it's nice to know the majority of our leaders are now behind us.

But unfortunately the really **bad news** is that while tobacco control funding remains flat, the tobacco industry is spending as much and more to promote smoking — especially to young adults.

That's why California must continue its aggressive campaign to counter the tobacco industry's tactics and commit more resources to fighting the war on tobacco.

For a copy of this report or to find out more about efforts to reduce tobacco use in your community, call **1.800.LUNG.USA** or visit us at **www.californialung.org**.